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ABSTRACT

The dual purpose of researching what an individual academic loves and using it for career advancement is a created possibility, not an organic outcome. Such possibilities can be created by using the following approaches: (1) research a subject of interest to yourself and then submit it to a population that is interested in the same material; (2) remember that a good research project is worthy of the highest form of recycling--reuse; (3) present a paper at one of the Speech Communication Association meetings and submit it to ERIC; (4) know who the audience might be for each type of research project; and (5) put a slant on the research (not the results) with the "spin" in vogue. Conducting research for publication is a joy and a delight when a person investigates a topic about which he or she is immensely curious. (A sample questionnaire about college speech communication programs is attached.) (SAM)

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"Research What You Love - And Get It Published Anyway"

by

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A Paper Presented at the
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of the
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There are some strong realities which seem to indicate that the concept of researching what you love and getting it published is an oxymoron. One of the main historic reasons to publish is emblazoned on the front of a Tee shirt I bought at the SCA convention in Chicago in 1990 - from the University of Alabama Press. It simply states: "Publish or Perish." Given the reality of the 1990's, even publishing does not ward off the demon of "perishing". Getting your work published has gone from being a necessity for acquiring tenure to a necessity for becoming and remaining employed.

Research can be a delightful fulfillment of curiosity or a necessary evil. The dual purpose of researching what you love and using it for career advancements is a created possibility not an organic outcome.

It is the basic premise of this paper that researching what you love ultimately results in the outcome of getting it published. My colleagues will address the issues of submitting research articles to regional and state journals. My intention here is to provide you with some principles of how to research what you love and be published.

There are many more traditional approaches for research and publication than presented here. The intention of this paper is not to offer the obvious traditional methods, but to offer alternative and perhaps subversive (but not libertine) methods. Some first-hand

experiences will be used to help illustrate the five principles offered in this paper.

The first step in researching what you love is the ultimate decision - that there is some information or idea about which you are so curious - and that is unavailable elsewhere - that the only thing for you to do is to conduct the research yourself. An example is a survey I conducted of each and every undergraduate degree-granting institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1989 on the State of Speech Communication in Massachusetts. The purpose of the research was to determine "(1) What colleges offer courses in Speech Communication? (2) What colleges are offering majors in Speech Communication? (3) What courses are being offered? (4) By whom? (5) With what Graduate Training? (6) What size institutions offer these courses and (7) Under which departmental designation are these courses being taught?"

My goal in conducting this research was to have a 100% response rate. As such, I created a K.I.S.S. (keep it simple, sweetheart) one-page survey (see addendum A) and enclosed a postage paid Business reply envelope so that each Vice President of Academic Affairs could check off the information, immediately fold and put the survey into the envelope and put the envelope in the out box, not into the bottomless "to do" file or the "circular" file. The initial mailing received a 66% response. A follow-up mailing brought the response rate up to 88%. The final 12% of the surveys

were completed through follow-up phone calls either to the Vice Presidents or to individuals in the college known to the author or her colleagues.

A paper on this research "The State of Speech Communication in Massachusetts: An Initial Report" was presented at the annual convention of the Communication Association of Massachusetts. It was then published in the Spring, 1990, "Massachusetts Journal of Communication". What this demonstrates is Principle #1 of researching what you love and getting it published anyway: Research what you love and then submit it to a population that's interested in exactly what you were curious about.

The above research project was also the basis for an idea for a SCA program - "An Irrational Act: Conducting Research at the Small College" which I chaired (1990). The paper I presented on that panel was "The Survey: Keep It Simple Sweetheart". The experience of conducting that research also served as part of the material for a paper presented at SCA (1991), "The Work Study Student as Collaborator: The Thrill of Victory, The Agony of Defeat". Both papers have been provisionally accepted by ERIC publications.

This leads to Principle #2 for researching what you love and getting it published anyway- a good research project is worthy of the highest form of recycling - reuse. It is not only not "cheating"; it is intelligent to get the most mileage from each research project

Thus, each research project should have the potential of being recycled at least three or four times - and published at least once or, if published in ERIC, at least twice (papers published by ERIC may also be published by Professional Journals).

This also leads to Principle #3 for researching what you love and getting it published anyway: Present a paper at SCA or ECA and submit it to ERIC. The steps to publication this way are simple: (1) conduct the research; (2) create a program (again aimed for a specific audience); (3) write a paper for that program; and (4) submit the paper after presentation to ERIC. The philosophy here is that any paper which has been accepted to be presented at a national or regional conference must be of sufficient quality to be published by ERIC - a fairly reasonable premise, given the competition at the National and Regional (and in some states, Statewide) conventions. The paper must also relate, of course, to education.

Next is Principle #4 for getting published: know who your audience might be for each type of research project. First, consider publications in journals. On the National level, each of the SCA journals has a statement of the kinds of papers that are likely to be accepted for each journal. SCA conferences usually have a program called "Meet the Editor" at which you can discover the most appropriate SCA journal for your work. Calls for papers for Regional and State Journals are usually published in Spectra.

Second, let's consider the "present the paper, then get it published" route. Your first step in this route is to determine which audience - i.e. - section or division of SCA or Regional - would most likely resonate with your work.

One very likely entrance venue is to bite the bullet (if absolutely necessary) and pay your own way to SCA and/or your Regional convention one year and get to as many section and caucus business meetings as possible in areas that appeal to you and apply to your research topic(s). This is where most of the panels are initiated. This is where the individuals who will be judging the papers will be met. I am not suggesting that you try and influence anyone - but it is a good communication strategy to remember that relationship creates affinity. This does not guarantee program acceptance - but almost never hurts.

A second reason for attending these business meetings is that you can then meet the individuals in the section or division. Thus, when you call individuals to invite them to submit a paper for a program/panel you're creating you are calling people with whom you have at least an initial acquaintance. It helps your credibility. It also helps you establish yourself in whatever section(s), division(s), or caucus(es) most appeal to you. Again this allows you to (1) have a paper or a panel programmed; and then (2) submit the paper for ERIC publication.

Principle #5 is simply to research what you love - and put a slant on the research (not the results!) with the "spin" in vogue. The year the panel "An Irrational Act: Conducting Research at the Small College" was accepted, the Convention Theme was *Rational Discourse in an Uncertain World*. The panel topic played off of the convention theme. The year the panel "Reaching Out: Student Research that Makes a Difference" was accepted the Convention Theme was *SCA Reaches Out*. A couple of the other panel titles show that this is a popular method: "Outreach: Speech Communication Professionals and the At-risk student " and "America Reaching Out Through Public Relations."

The paper I presented at "Reaching Out: Student Research that Makes a Difference" was entitled "10¢ to Save a Life: Ending Hunger as a Special Event". This paper was (1) presented at SCA; (2) is provisionally accepted by ERIC; and (3) is being published by the Massachusetts Journal of Communication.

Finally, a paper presented at ECA, "The Student Journal: Integration through Creative and Critical Analysis," is now ERIC document #333503. Although it was not research, it is an example of publication through presentation.

For me, research is a joy and delight - most specifically when I am researching a topic about which I am immensely curious. Traditional methods of publication are well documented, but they do not always allow for the publication of curiosity-based research.

Here are some basic principles for alternative methods and to stimulate individual creativity in order to research what you love - and get it published anyway!

